

Driver Safety Course Required for Bluffton High Students

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Bluffton leaders have a new approach to keeping student drivers safe on the road. They're adding a new required course to teens' schedule.

"We are going to partner to bring Alive at 25 to all of the students at Bluffton High," Bluffton Police Chief David McAllister said. "In fact, it's going to be a requirement that if you drive on this campus or you want to park on this campus, you must participate in this program."

Alive at 25 is a four-and-a-half hour class designed to make safer drivers out of teens and young adults. Bluffton High is only the second school in the state to make such a move.

But Lowcountry leaders almost saw it their duty to push this program forward. Since the school's opening in 2004, five Bluffton High students have died from car crashes.

Most recently was Josh George, a star student and athlete killed by a drunken driver as he was traveling home from prom. Josh was not wearing his seatbelt.

It's a heart-wrenching story many in the Lowcountry often think about, including the police chief, who had to make that dreaded phone call.

"I don't want to make that call again, quite frankly. I don't want to make it," Chief McAllister said.

"I want to wake up every Saturday morning and not have to make that phone call and that's why we're having to do this program," McAllister added.

If there's any bright spot amidst the darkness of Josh George's death, perhaps it's in the way those who knew him react on the road.

"That really affected people a lot ... how people drive and just to be more responsible," Sophomore Hunter Vangeison said.

It can also be found in the reality check that came to those who guide these students.

"We are determined to no longer be a statistic," Eric Snider, Assistant Principal at Bluffton High said.

And, also, in the persistence it gave authorities to put a stop to senseless deaths.

"From this day forward, if a young person gets any citation and they'd like to make any kind of plea agreement, they must first complete Alive at 25," Chief McAllister said.

"They will not be offered any deal at municipal court unless they have completed this program. It will give us another opportunity to capture yet another group who may have made the wrong choice already and make sure they're educated."

Every student driver who plans to park on Bluffton High campus must complete the course. It's a requirement for them that will hopefully prevent the call that never comes easy.

"I can tell you that there's no call like that, it makes you feel sick," McAllister said.

The first course is Saturday, October 4th at Bluffton High. Non- Bluffton High students are invited. For more information, call the Bluffton Police Department at 843-706-4550.